

Salem National Banking Company
(City of Salem Municipal Building)
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
moved to 1 New Market Street
Salem
Salem County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1158

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SALEM NATIONAL BANKING COMPANY (CITY OF SALEM MUNICIPAL BUILDING)

HABS No. NJ-1158

Location: moved to 1 New Market Street, Salem, Salem County, New Jersey

Significance: The Salem National Banking Company building is an excellent example of Queen Anne eclecticism produced as a result of the commercial prosperity of this city during the late nineteenth-century, as well as being home to the county's oldest banking concern.

Description: The outstanding ornament and texture of this Victorian building masks its basic two-story, rectangular block. Walls and foundation are brick laid in common bond, on the three-bay front facade the foundation is faced with stone. The center door appears to be recessed because it is flanked by the projecting southeast tower and the pedimented northeast bay; overhead is a decorative scroll-like brick sign-block that reads "City of Salem Municipal Building." The fenestration and patterning on the facades is irregular: The first-floor window openings are large and arcuated, with decorative stone moldings and sills on the front facade and molded brick on the sides. The one-over-one-light, double-hung sash in the openings is modern, aluminum, and awkwardly retrofitted in place. There is one brick chimney at the rear. Outstanding decorative details include: the acanthus-carved stone door surround with a portrait of Benjamin Acton and side-window keystones boasting an acanthus design; stone and brick beltcourses; continuous modillioned cornice; roof cresting and finials; decorative roof shingles, blind circular dormers with scrolls, round window with quatrefoil glazing, and helvedere all on the tower.

Inside, the main banking room had quartered-oak woodwork and a frescoed ceiling, but both have been painted over. The tellers' cages have been removed.

History: The Salem Steam-Mill and Banking Company was formed in 1823; the milling company was sold off two years later, but the latter was the first banking establishment in Salem County, and continued to operate for many years. In 1865 the Salem National Banking Company was incorporated as the successor to that financial institution, and architect David Evans of Philadelphia was hired to erect the new headquarters. Erected on Broadway just west of New Market Street in 1888-89, the structure was moved to its present site in 1926. At this time it was converted to the City of Salem Municipal Building, and a new bank headquarters was constructed at its original site.

Little is known about the designer, Evans, whose name appears in Philadelphia city directories in 1876-1909 as an architect or a civil engineer. He was an unsuccessful entrant in the competition for the design of the Philadelphia Bourse Building. James E. Dunham did the brickwork, Joseph Collins the carpentry. Benjamin Acton, whose portrait is carved in the keystone over the entrance, was a prominent Salem merchant and one of the bank incorporators in 1865. He was a cashier--an executive position--from 1871-81.

Sources:

Broadway Historic District National Register nomination, ref #92000098 (5 March 1992).

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

Project Information: The project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian. The project was completed during summer 1992. The project historian was Kimberly R. Sebold (University of Delaware). The photography was produced by David Ames, University of Delaware, Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering.